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STATE FOR WHA AND USOAS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/24/2016

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SUBJECT: HAITI: MANIGAT'S WIFE WITHDRAWS FROM SENATE RACE

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i, Douglas M. Griffiths for Reasons  
: 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (U) Myrlande Manigat, the Assembly of Progressive National Democrats (RDNP) senatorial candidate for the West (Port-au-Prince), abruptly withdrew from the race February 21 despite having won enough votes to qualify for the second round run-off election. With all senatorial ballots counted (septel), Manigat, who also served as her husband's campaign manager, finished second among the fifty-six candidates competing for three senate seats, according to news reports. (Note: Official senate results for the West department are not yet available, though partial results for the remaining departments are accessible on the CEP website, [www.cep-ht.org](http://www.cep-ht.org). End Note.) The top six finishers in each department will go on to the second round. RDNP issued a press release February 21 announcing her "personal decision with the party's support" to withdraw to express her rejection of the presidential election results. The party recommended that all its candidates adopt a similar position. Mrs. Manigat told post's Pol specialist on February 21 that her decision was "irrevocable."

¶2. (U) Mrs. Manigat spoke on Radio Metropole February 22 and stated her decision was a matter of principle. She claimed that the CEP had violated both the Haitian constitution and the electoral law. Further, she shared that as a university professor who has often lectured on the rule of law, she felt it would have been hypocritical for her to continue in "an election that did not observe the law."

¶3. (SBU) Comment: Leslie Manigat had earlier generated a firestorm of controversy during a February 18 press conference in which he quoted Proverbs 26:11, "As a dog returns to his vomit, so a fool returns to his folly" to describe Preval's victory. Preval voters and many other of Haiti's lower classes interpreted the remarks as comparing poor Haitians to dogs even though many had actually voted for Mrs. Manigat for senate. Many observers attribute Mrs. Manigat's decision to withdrawal to fears that reaction to her husband's remarks would lead to her defeat.

¶4. (C) Comment continued: Whatever her reasons, we are disappointed by Mrs. Manigat's decision to withdraw. Many, including several members of other parties, expected her to be a leader within the Senate, and her announcement (and the party's call for its candidates to withdraw from the run-off elections) is a blow to the electoral process. Preval

advisor Bob Manuel told Charge Griffiths that the president-elect was prepared to support Mrs. Manigat as president of the senate. Her withdrawal opens the door to a wider boycott of the second round of parliamentary races by parties opposed to Preval. Thus far we have only heard of one RDNP senate candidate in the Artibonite who is considering withdrawing from the second round. Though her February 22 announcement appears to close the door on her reentry into the race, Haitians of various political persuasions are attempting to change Mrs. Manigat's mind, and post will also raise the issue in a meeting with her and her husband scheduled February 24. End comment.

GRIFFITHS